The Use of Esztergom (Ritus Strigoniensis)

The Latin liturgy lived in many variants in the Middle Ages. With respect to their character and history of development, we may distinguish two major periods, and accordingly two principal types of ritual variants. The first group comprises the ritual variants dating to the period prior to the process of Romanisation at first supported and later commanded by the Carolingian rulers, the second includes the post-Carolingian variants which were later discontinued in the wake of the Council of Trent.

The so-called old Latin liturgies, belonging to the first group, developed in connection with particular cities or regions and synchronically to each other, thus there are fundamental structural differences between them. Among these we may list the Beneventan, Mozarabic, Gallican, Ambrosian liturgies, and the rite of the City of Rome (this latter is called old Roman in order to distinguish it from the general label “Roman”, usually applied to the later forms of Western liturgies).

To the second group belong the individual variants of the so-called Franko-Roman liturgy.¹ The original intention of the Carolingian rulers and their commissioned liturgical experts was undoubtedly to appropriate the old Roman liturgy as faithfully as possible, and they intended to make its well-regulated and unchanged observance mandatory in the entire Frankish empire. Total uniformity, however, proved to be impossible to accomplish for two reasons. On the one hand, the old Roman liturgy of the 8th century was not fully defined and unified, and its interaction with the Transalpine regions had already begun by that time. Thus from the beginning the commissioned experts encountered an heterogeneous old Roman tradition, and they identified several differences between the earlier and the later elements of this tradition. On the other hand, the austere, almost puritanical character of the old Roman liturgy seemed somewhat foreign to the inhabitants of the Transalpine regions, and its adoption would have required the abandonment of many widespread customs, texts, gestures that were considered important components of the liturgical taste of Gallican and Germanic spirituality. In this situation, the Carolingian experts felt compelled, despite their original intentions, to use the available material somewhat creatively, although their activity was marked by venerable moderation. Since their construction consisted mostly of different old Roman elements enriched by many non-Roman additions, the result of their redactive efforts may with good reason be

called Franko-Roman. This liturgy, though it lived in many variants, was structurally uniform, which cannot be said of the old Latin liturgies. Its texts, melodies, and ceremonies were taken from one common fund.

The Franko-Roman liturgy could not become completely uniform, partly because of the insistence of the pre-Carolingian traditions, partly due to the heterogeneous character of its sources, and partly on account of the fragmentation of the secular and ecclesiastical structure following the death of Charlemagne. From the very beginning, liturgical uniformity was not perfect, and later the divergence of the particular local uses began spontaneously. (The only deliberate and structurally apparent difference was in the Divine Office between its secular and monastic usages.) Following the weakening of the central government and the concomitant strengthening of the particular churches, the spontaneously developed differences were perceived and jealously guarded as the guarantees of regional or institutional identity. This change in perspective favoured the process of making the differences more emphatic.

When, beginning with the 10th century, Christianity has conquered new countries and new dioceses had to be created, these ecclesiastical territories appropriated the Franko-Roman liturgy already in accordance with the new paradigm. In the case of the liturgy of the young new churches, the regional rites were not formed by some sort of spontaneous divergence, but as a result of a deliberate process of redaction.\footnote{The question is discussed and documented in further detail by FÖLDVÁRY Miklós István: Rubrica Strigoniensis. A középkori Esztergom liturgiájának normaszövegei. PhD thesis, Budapest, Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem, Nyelvtudományi Doktoriskola, Ókortudományi Program 2008. 96sqq. 119sqq. — see online (with an English summary) http://latin.elte.hu/munkatarsak/FM_files/disszertacio.shtml}

The same could be said about the rites of the Benedictine reform-movements and of the other, even more centralised religious orders. Consequently, from the 11th century until the end of the Middle Ages we encounter well-definable diocesan and regional uses or those of the religious orders. The rite of the Papal Court must be counted as one among these variants which was also adopted by the Franciscan Order. It was not identical to the old Roman rite of the major Basilicas in Rome; rather it was part of the Franko-Roman ritual family.

Except for some feeble attempts earlier, the programme of making the Western liturgy completely uniform became topical and possible only in the 16th century. In this period the danger has become too real that Europe would disintegrate into a multitude of autonomous national churches. In this perspective the individual ritual variants emphasising the national character of the particular churches were seen as favouring the schismatic tendencies. At the same time, due to the challenge represented by the Protestant Reformation it seemed desirable to subject the liturgy, one of the sources and most important expressions of the apostolic deposit of faith, to a more
rigorous doctrinal supervision. This process was technically supported by the invention of the printing press, which made the typographers, book sellers, and the clergy more interested even financially in producing or using uniform liturgical books published in numbers unknown before. (Later the typographers worked with papal privileges.) Hence, when in obedience to the resolutions of the Council of Trent the liturgical books of the Roman rite were published in normative editions between 1568 and 1614, the conditions were already ripe for their swift spread and large-scale acceptance. Although absolutely speaking only the adoption of the new Pontifical was made obligatory and the Ritual remained completely optional, moreover, those Breviaries and Missals that had more than 200 years of history could be maintained in liturgical use, in practice if there remained any diocese that had not adopted the “Roman”, that is, the Curial-Franciscan rite by the 17th century, it was consid-

erred somewhat of an anomaly. This Romanisation was only withstood by some of the religious orders, but even in these cases there were significant compromises. From this time on, at least on the level of written sources, the Roman liturgy appears uniform.

Until today liturgical historians have not placed due emphasis on the post-Carolingian ritual variants. Particular traditions have been treated as some kind of curiosity and mostly from the point of view of local or national history. Thus for a long time there was no attempt to treat these ritual variants systematically and the occasional inquiries did not reflect upon the very essence of the phenomenon. Studies typically focused on the most unusual ceremonies, and other than this, the liturgical scholars only identified the calendar, especially with reference to the sanctoral cycle, as the bearer of the regional character.

In terms of this outlook, it was not liturgical history strictly speaking, but musicology that resulted in a breakthrough. From the very beginning the study of the Gregorian melodic repertory was inseparable from the study of the liturgical texts. After the Gradual (the sung items of the Mass) which is rather uniform in this regard, the attention of scholars turned to the textual choices of the Antiphonal (the sung items of the Divine Office). Soon it became obvious – to a great extent as a result of the research of medieval Hungarian music – that the post-Carolingian ritual variants were actually more securely and more manifestly identifiable based on the choice and order of items within the temporal cycle, although previously it was assumed to be uniform. Even if it has to be conceded that to date we do not have the complete European perspective, with this realisation it became possible to identify clearly the individual ritual variants, and all the previous conclusions drawn on the basis of fine arts in service of divine worship, melodic variants, palaeography, musical notation, liturgical texts, or rubrics have been solidified.

Since the systematic research of the choice and order of items in the Antiphonal was especially stimulated by a Hungarian group of scholars, the processing of the Hungarian tradition from this perspective has been accomplished, and this fact sets an example on an international level. The ecclesiastical structure of medieval Hungary was rather unified, it was centrally organised within a short period of time without any substantial institutional precedent. The regions, sub-regions, dioceses, cities, and individual churches were in constant contact with each other. This historical circumstance, coupled with the fact that a very large percentage of the Hungarian sources were destroyed and so the scholars did not have to go through a great mass of fairly similar sources, made this process much easier. The main points of study were
the structure of the Divine Office, the repertory of the items both textual and musical, and their liturgical assignation.\(^4\)

Thus the following could be determined about the Hungarian Office-tradition and through it about the whole rite: it possesses some characteristics that are applicable to the entirety of the Hungarian tradition, but cannot be found in their totality in any other tradition. These characteristics have parallels all over Europe, but do not indicate any single direction. This proves that the Hungarian liturgy does not appear either partially or as a whole to be the adoption of any foreign tradition. Its structure is characterised by different strata of traditions whose relationship is best described in a hierarchical arrangement.\(^5\)

The entire Hungarian tradition is sometimes called the Esztergom use (\textit{ritus Strigoniensis}), after the primatial see of the country. Its central and best documented variant is the actual use of Esztergom, whose purest representatives are Esztergom itself, Buda, with insignificant changes Pozsony (Pressburg in German, at present Bratislava in Slovakia), or – at times with mild variations – the central and northern regions of historical Hungary. To this partial tradition belong the less consistently formulated practice of the Szepesség (Zipserland, today in Slovakia) and the liturgical use of the Pauline Order,\(^6\) which was founded by a former canon of Esztergom (hence the codification of the Esztergom use as the proper custom of the order). The final and standard form of the Pauline use was most probably determined only by its last pre-Tridentine redaction in the 14th century.

The second archiepiscopal see of Hungary (in the Middle Ages there were only two) was Kalocsa (later Bács or Kalocsa-Bács) which wielded authority over the southern regions of the kingdom and had its own separate usage, but its surviving sources in comparison to Esztergom are very few. There are many more sources to rely on in the case of Zagreb (Zágráb in Hungarian) which was a simple episcopal

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\(^5\) This arrangement and the classification of the office variants is best described by DOBSZAY László: \textit{Corpus antiphonalum. Európai örökség és hazai alakítás}. Balassi Kiadó, Budapest 2003. 335qq.

\(^6\) On the Pauline rite see TÖRÖK József: \textit{A magyar pálosrend liturgiájának forrássai, kialakulása és főbb sajátosságai (1225–1600)}. Római Katolikus Hit tudományi Akadémia, Budapest 1977.
see, and as such, was a suffragan of Kalocsa, even though eventually it surpassed Kalocsa in importance. Zagreb was only placed under the ecclesiastical authority of Kalocsa in 1180, and so the earliest deposits of its liturgy show distinct influences of Esztergom. In the 14th century the rite of Zagreb became uniform, and to such an extent, that in the 15th to 16th centuries it possessed more and better liturgical books than Esztergom itself. In the course of the 14th century curial and, according to some, Dominican influences became prevalent, and so the identification of the different elements of Esztergom, Kalocsa, and possibly of the Papal Court or the Dominican Order poses a difficult problem. Kalocsa and Zagreb thus make up the second major ritual territory of medieval Hungary.

The third and last major ritual territory is comprised of Transylvania (Erdély in Hungarian, now a part of Romania) and the Eastern region whose centre was the city of Várad (later Nagyvárad, at present Oradea in Romania). The liturgy of these parts is better documented than that of Kalocsa, but less well documented than that of Zagreb, and its detailed analysis has not yet been published. It is important from a chronological standpoint that the earliest Hungarian source of the Divine Office is most likely a representative of this use on an archaic level, from which we may infer that the most important characteristics of the major Hungarian ritual traditions were already discernible at the beginning of the 12th century. Geographically the Barcaság (Burzenland), and thus the sources from Szeben (later Nagyszeben, Hermannstadt in German, at present Sibiu) and Brassó (Kronstadt in German, at present Brașov) belonged to Transylvania, but ecclesiastically this region was actually under the jurisdiction of Esztergom. Consequently, its liturgical situation was similar to that of the Szepesség.

In addition to the three major ritual territories, it must be mentioned that the more “self-conscious” dioceses and the more affluent city parishes (e.g. Kassa, Kaschau in German, at present Košice in Slovakia, or Kolozsvár, Klausenburg in German, at present Cluj-Napoca in Romania) deliberately tried to individualise their liturgical practice. From among the suffragan bishoprics under Esztergom, we possess somewhat particular liturgical books from Veszprém, Pécs, and Eger, while city

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9 This phenomenon is discussed by SZENDREI Janka: A magyar középkor hangjegyei forrásai. Budapest 1981. (Műhelytanulmányok a magyar zenetörténethez 1) 16sq., 27sq.

10 Budapest, Országos Széchényi Könyvtár Clmæ 317. A 14th century Pontifical of Veszprém.
parishes with individual liturgical practices were to be found especially in the urban regions of Upper-Hungary and Transylvania (often inhabited by Saxon settlers). Due particularly to the transitional or deliberately individualised ritual variants, the provenience of some undoubtedly Hungarian, but in their character rather mixed sources could not yet be determined with real certainty.

In historical terms the use of Esztergom is rather unvarying from the first sources until the era of the printing press. Its first mature document was a book, now lost, probably compiled before the end of the 11th century according to the pattern of the Romano-Germanic Pontifical. At this time, however, the order of the Esztergom Office was not yet finished: its completion must be dated to the period between the end of the 11th century and the production of the aforementioned 12th century Antiphonal, but its elaborate form was only achieved later. The characteristic points of the Mass rite in the Esztergom use, principally the processional ceremonies of Candlemass and Ash Wednesday and the Holy Week ceremonies, are already present in the 11th century Pontifical stratum. A peculiar Mass proper is less tangible. Some of the typical textual choices and some of the characteristics of the Ordo Missae are already present by the end of the 12th century, but we cannot speak of a mature and fixed Mass rite of Esztergom until the first half of the 14th century.


13 As for the fragments of the ordines of the liturgical year see the unpublished edition in the appendix of the aforementioned PhD thesis, i.e. FÖLDVÁRY Miklós István: Fragmenta Pontificalis antiqui Strigoniensis collata ex integris rubricis sex principium fontium seculorum XI–XVI., earundem synopsis atque nonnullis testimbus referentiisque.

14 The first extant source of the Esztergom mass rites is Budapest, Országos Széchényi Könyvtár MNy 1. A 12th century Hungarian monastic Sacramentary usually called the Codex Pray.
The turn of the 13th and 14th centuries is considered the classical period in the history of the Esztergom use. In this period the liturgy of both the Divine Office and the Mass was fixed textually and melodically by representative, influential codices (one in each category). Except for a few changes, the first, 15th century printed editions are direct descendants of these books. The printed books of the 15th and 16th centuries introduced new things more in terms of layout and design than with regard to actual content. Among these must be counted the six known editions of the Esztergom Ordinal.

In the first decades of the Turkish-Ottoman invasion of Hungary the printing of liturgical books came to an abrupt halt, and only during and after the Council of Trent were there a few attempts to update the Esztergom rite with the publication of one Breviary, two Rituals, and one Ordinal. On account of the international tendencies and the grave shortage of books these attempts were bound to failure. At the proposal and instigation of the most famous representative of the Hungarian Catho-


19 Ordinarium officii divini secundum consuetudinem metropolitanae ecclesie Strigoniensis, a mendis purgatum et editum, opera et expensis reverendissimi domini Nicolai Telegdini episcopi Quinqueecclesiensis, et in spiritualibus administroris archiepiscopatus Strigoniensis. Nagyszombat/Trnava 1580. (RMK II. 160.).
lic Restoration, Péter Cardinal Pázmány, the national synod of 1630–1633 approved the abandonment of the Esztergom use and the adoption of the “Roman”, that is, the Curial-Franciscan variant. From the earlier tradition only some of the feasts of Hungarian saints and a few peculiarities of the old calendar remained, but even these were given new properss. In the wider sphere of influence of the Esztergom use, only the cathedral of Zagreb had recourse to the option offered by the Holy See, and it held onto its medieval practice until 1788.21
